

# ADVENTISTS AND MILITARY SERVICE IN GERMANY

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE PROBLEM OF MILITARY SERVICE IN GERMANY 1871-1914

#### Policy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists on Military Service 1862-1914

The attitude of the Seventh-day Adventists toward the performance of military duties became an important issue early in the church's history and it has remained one ever since. The stand of noncombatancy taken by the church leaders in the United States was not recognized by the German government, whose rule of universal military service made many difficulties for the young men of Seventh-day Adventist faith. The Adventist attitude provoked a popular hostility against the movement but it was diminished by Adventist willingness to serve in some other capacity than the bearing of arms. During World War I when the German Adventists wholeheartedly supported their government in contravention of the basic denominational position the earlier antagonism practically vanished.

Adventist beliefs on military service were first expressed by Ellen G. White in the early months of the American Civil War when she stated that, in harmony with the principles of their faith, Seventh-day Adventists could not engage in war; the principles of the church and the require-



ments of the military officers ran counter to each other, and therefore both could not be obeyed at the same time.

By a resolution of the executive committee of the General Conference on August 2, 1864, Seventh-day Adventists first officially declared themselves as noncombatants. On instruction of the General Conference Executive Committee, John N. Andrews went to Washington, D. C., and filed a statement with Provost Marshal General Fry, on August 20, in 1864. The Provost Marshal acknowledged its receipt a few days later and subsequently the government recognized Seventh-day Adventists as noncombatants. At the third annual session of the General Conference held at Battle Creek, Michigan, on May 17, 1865, the denomination reiterated its position of noncombatancy, and again at the fourth annual session in 1866.<sup>1</sup>

The convention in 1866 adopted a resolution on the duty of Seventh-day Adventists to the government. The church leaders recognized that the civil government was ordained of God so that order, justice, and peace might be maintained in the land, and the people might live peacefully and honestly. In accordance with this resolution they acknowledged the justice of performing their duty to the government as enjoined in the New Testament, but only as long as the government's requirements did not violate the Law of God.

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<sup>1</sup>Review and Herald (Battle Creek), September 13, 1864, p. 124; March 7, 1865, p. 109; May 23, 1865, p. 197, Report of the third annual session of the General Conference at Battle Creek, Michigan, May 17, 1865; May 22, 1866, p. 196.



If they did, then the Adventist had no choice but to refuse to obey the government, since, according to Scriptures, the Law of God was above laws made by man.<sup>2</sup>

At the fifth annual session of the General Conference at Battle Creek in 1867 a resolution was adopted which reiterated the conviction of Seventh-day Adventists that the bearing of arms, or engaging in war, was a direct violation of the teachings of Christ and of the spirit and letter of the law of God.<sup>3</sup> No further pronouncement was made by the General Conference until November, 1915, when the General Resolutions Committee of the General Conference reaffirmed the position of Seventh-day Adventists on the question of military service and their relation to the government, and again, in April, 1917, at Huntsville, Alabama, when they passed a like resolution.<sup>4</sup> In 1920, Irwin H. Evans, then president of the North American Division, made a new re-statement of the denominational viewpoint that the Christian must submit to every civil ordinance when it does not conflict with his duty to God. Thus from 1864, when Seventh-day Adventists made their first official declaration of noncombatancy, to 1920, two years after the close of war,

2. Review and Herald (Battle Creek), May 22, 1866, p. 196.

3. Ibid., May 15, 1868, p. 283.

4. Zions-Wächter (Hamburg), December 2, 1918, p. 209;  
Wächter der Wahrheit (Hamburg), April 1, 1919, p. 15. .



the policy of the denomination had not changed in the United States.<sup>5</sup>

German Adventist Policy Toward Military Service  
and German Military Law

Shortly after Louis R. Conradi arrived in Germany in 1866 he was confronted with the problem of the relationship of the German Seventh-day Adventist youth to military service. German Adventists wondered whether the policy pursued in the United States relative to military service was equally applicable to Germany, and whether varying circumstances might rightly modify the policy. When Mrs. White was in Basel in 1886, she was asked by the European Adventist leaders to state her position on this issue. She replied that every young man in the army should do his duty as ordered by his superiors, but with the distinct understanding that he was not to break the commandments of God. Denominational leaders in Europe interpreted this assertion to mean that military service was sanctioned if the consciences of the youth so dictated. Accordingly Adventists in Germany performed military duty willingly if it did not include the use of weapons of war and the performing of duty on Saturday, their Sabbath.<sup>6</sup>

As the German Adventist membership increased, the question of military service became a critical issue. Under

5. Review and Herald (Washington, D. C.), June 7, 1920, p. 5; Lewis H. Christian, The Aftermath of Fanaticism or a Counterfeit Reformation (Washington, D. C., 1948), p. 30.

6. Christian, op. cit., p. 14.



the constitution of 1871 and the military laws of the German empire every able-bodied young man was required to perform military duty in the army or navy, and he could not be relieved of his duties by a substitute or replacement.<sup>7</sup>

According to the constitution every able-bodied male between the ages of eighteen and forty-five was a member of the Landsturm (militia).<sup>8</sup> Military duty in the standing army during peace time was for a period of seven years: three years of active duty beginning at the age of twenty, followed by four years of reserve duty. This was followed by a five-year enrollment in the Landwehr or National Guard of the first class and service in the second class until the age of thirty-nine.<sup>9</sup>

Except those assigned to the medical corps, all in the military or naval service were required to bear arms. German law gave no recognition to pacifist religious scruples of any kind. Disobedience to orders, whether through a non-observance or arbitrary violation was punished with arrest. By law peacetime detention could be imposed, depending on circumstances, from fourteen days to three

7. Deutsche Wehrordnung, sec. 2, par. 4, p. 10; Handbuch der Deutschen Verfassungen, "Constitution of 1871," sec. XI, art. 57, p. 21.
8. Ibid., par. 20, p. 22; "Reichs-Militär-gesetz," 2 Mai 1874, art. 2, sec. 4, par. 24, pp. 355.
9. Handbuch der Deutschen Verfassungen, "Constitution of 1871," sec. XI, art. 57, p. 21; Deutsche Wehrordnung, "Gesetz, betreffend Aenderungen der Wehrpflicht," vom 11 Februar 1888, p. 358; sec. 2, par. 4, 5, p. 11; par. 13, 14, 20, pp. 17-18; "Reichs-Militär-gesetz," 2 Mai 1874, art. 2, sec. 2, par. 8, p. 350; art. 2, sec. 1, par. 2, 3, p. 348.



years.<sup>10</sup> When the offense consisted of the refusal to obey an order to bear arms against the enemy by command issued on the battlefield the penalty was death or, in extenuating circumstances, imprisonment of ten years to life.<sup>11</sup>

Military Service as Practiced by Seventh-day  
Adventists in Germany 1875 to 1914

Most of the German Adventists before 1914 were opposed to the bearing of arms; they were not, however, opposed to other types of military service as long as this service did not interfere with their seventh-day Sabbath observance. It was compatible with their religious principles to work in the medical corps caring for the sick on Saturday or to perform necessary sanitary duties.<sup>12</sup>

The German Seventh-day Adventist young men drafted into the armed forces before 1914 faced many hardships as a result of adhering to their beliefs. Although the organization itself still left it to the individual's conscience to decide whether he should bear arms and perform duty on Saturday, the majority refused to do so. In some instances, beginning in 1878, the church leaders were called before the

10. Those exempted from military service were members of the Reichstag and Bundesrat, persons employed in vital military industries and the physically and mentally unfit. Although no one else was exempted from military duty, Catholic priests were not called upon to bear arms because of their canonical rights and sometimes Protestant ministers were not called. Deutsche Wehrordnung, pp. 10-11; Jurgen Schreiber, Die Kriegsdienstverweigerung eine historische und rechtsvergleichende Untersuchung (Bonn, 1952), pp. 79-83.
11. W. C. Solms, ed. Strafrecht und Strafprozess für Heer und Marine des Deutschen Reichs (Berlin, 1892), 3rd ed., par. 93, pp. 109-110.
12. Review and Herald (Battle Creek), February 4, 1896, p. 72; Spicer, Our Story of Missions, pp. 112-13.



military authorities, for the military courts believed that these conscripted young men were influenced by their spiritual advisers rather than being actuated by love for their religion. The church leaders, however, asserted that each Adventist soldier must act according to the dictates of his conscience. In no instance were the courts able to determine that a soldier was acting under the influence of his spiritual advisers. The German Ministry of War resolved on the strict enforcement of the law, hoping that the severity of punishment might bring these Seventh-day Adventist young men to terms. Military authorities were astonished to find that these soldiers were willing to endure harsh punishment rather than do ordinary work on Saturday. Whenever Adventist soldiers were put in prison the church leaders felt that it would not be wise for the denominational journals to comment on the act, for fear that stiffer penalties might be imposed.<sup>13</sup>

The examples which follow are illustrative of the difficulties faced by Adventist soldiers who felt they could make no compromise with what they considered to be wrong. Occasionally the problems were resolved in a soldier's favor, at other times, not.

Robert Kumpel in 1901 notified his commanding officer that he could not bear arms and work on Saturday. Kumpel was informed that he would have to make himself

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13. Review and Herald (Washington, D. C.), September 26, 1907, pp. 12-13.



available and to give up his beliefs during his military tour of duty. He replied that it was impossible for him to meet these stipulations and that if his refusal would result in punishment, he would rather suffer. The officers advised him to be reasonable and to reconsider his position. On the first Saturday, however, he was not assigned any duty. During the following week the head sergeant informed Kumpel before the entire company that he should not have any duties on Saturday since it was his day of worship. He could do as he wished on that day, but on Sundays he was to work.<sup>14</sup>

Johann Strasser received exemption from military service in the Prussian army in 1903 because of the example set by his father, Martin Strasser, twenty-five years before. In reply to the question of how long he had observed Saturday, Johann Strasser answered that he had done so from childhood, as his parents had. Asked whether his father had served in the army, he replied in the affirmative, but added that he had not worked on Saturday. Until that time (1878), Johann's father had been the only Adventist who had refused to work on Saturday while in the army, and his disobedience resulted in a prison sentence of three years. The officers who questioned that conscientious father's son, a quarter of a century later, were convinced that he, too, would remain true to his religious principles and therefore he was given his freedom on Saturday.<sup>15</sup>

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14. Zions-Wächter (Hamburg), December 2, 1901, p. 149.  
 15. Review and Herald (Washington, D. C.), September 26, 1907, p. 12; General Conference Bulletin V (April 9, 1903), 135; Historical Sketches, pp. 19-20; Spicer, Our Story of Missions, pp. 132-33.



Two recalcitrant Adventist youth received harsh punishment. Hermann Gross was sentenced to eight years of imprisonment in 1904 and served four years in military prison, often in solitary confinement and at times in a dark cell. Hans Krämer received a similar sentence. Both of these men were released when medical officers certified that longer confinement would result in death.<sup>16</sup>

German Adventists conscripted into the army usually presented the problem of seventh-day Sabbath observance to their sergeant, who in turn referred it to higher officers. One such Adventist, Herbert Hauser, who entered the service in 1905, was sent to a chaplain who told him that in the military no account was taken of one's religious scruples but that he as a minister could not advise him to work if it was contrary to conviction. The commanding officer informed him that he honored him for his principles, but that no exception could be made because of one's religious belief. After a physical examination, Hauser was declared mentally and physically unfit and was condemned by the commanding officer to fourteen days' arrest. The sentence was suspended, however, since the case was to be handled by the military court. He was again sent to the commanding officer, who advised him to perform duty on Saturday. Hauser still refused to act contrary to his principles and was placed

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16. Zions-Wächter (Hamburg), October 27, 1904, p. 18; Historical Sketches, pp. 19-20.



under arrest. Later, forced to appear before a court-martial, he had an opportunity to present his Adventist beliefs. The military authorities were surprised to learn that there were young people who still adhered so strictly to their religion. They were of the opinion that punishments meted out to other Adventists had changed the attitude of Seventh-day Adventist soldiers toward seventh-day Sabbath observance. During Hauser's court-martial Conradi and Schubert were present and explained the position of their church regarding this doctrine. As a result, after the matter was placed before the general and military chaplains, Hauser received several week's freedom from duty on Saturday.

Later, the sergeant-major read to Hauser a decision of the War Ministry, stating that the freedom granted on Saturdays was discontinued. The sergeant then delivered an order for him to report for duty on that day, but Hauser refused and was sentenced by the military court to forty-three days in jail.<sup>17</sup> After serving his time he was freed and sent back to his unit commander. Thereafter Hauser had to report to the commanding officer every Friday evening before he was permitted to have the next day free of duty. Subsequently he was informed that if he refused Saturday duty again he would be brought once more before the military court. In the meantime, however, he was sent to the garrison hospital in Munich for observation. The physician found

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17. Zions-Wächter (Hamburg), September 17, 1906, pp. 309-10; Militär-Strafgesetzbuch (Military Penal Code for the German Empire), par. 48, chap. 3, p. 16.



nothing mentally wrong but reported that the soldier's nerves had been greatly weakened through his imprisonment and that he was inclined to hysterical attacks, which would most likely occur if he was ordered to perform duty on Saturday. The doctor further certified that Hauser's physical condition predisposed him to typhus or pneumonia and pronounced him therefore unfit for duty. The military court nevertheless declared Hauser mentally and physically normal and sentenced him to two months' imprisonment for an earlier refusal to work on Saturday. He was finally discharged, however, as unfit. Hauser protested against being discharged on that basis, but to no avail; the military authorities advised him to accept and to be satisfied with the verdict.<sup>18</sup>

Most of the German Adventist soldiers willingly served as attendants in army hospitals since service of this nature on Saturday was in harmony with their beliefs. Nevertheless, some Adventists felt that their consciences would not permit them to even go that far. One such was Friedrich Weinman. After explaining his religious beliefs to the superintendent of the army hospital at Karlsruhe, Baden, in 1906, Weinman asked for freedom from service on Saturdays. The superintendent recommended to the commanding officer that his request be granted. Although he did not receive direct permission from this officer to have his Saturdays free from duty, Weinman understood from conversation

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18. Zions-Wächter, loc. cit.



with him that the permission was implied. On Saturday, however, he was informed that he would have to wash windows that morning but would be free to attend his church in the afternoon. The soldier pleaded for permission to do the work on Sunday instead and his request was granted. On the following Saturday, however, he was ordered to pick up paper from the lawns and to work in the hospital. The commanding officer, a Catholic, after several conversations with Weinman, was convinced that his beliefs were commendable, and he was granted his Saturdays duty free.<sup>19</sup>

Another young Adventist, Conrad M<sup>u</sup>gge of Altona-Hamburg, inducted into the army in 1906, was put in prison for his refusal to work on Saturday. The chaplain of his unit became convinced of the genuine Christianity of the young man and went to the Hamburg Publishing House to secure information about Adventist beliefs. In light of what he considered a noteworthy example of a man standing up for his convictions, the chaplain wrote an article in the Neue Preussische Zeitung, a leading conservative newspaper of Berlin, explaining M<sup>u</sup>gge's beliefs and supporting him in this particular case. Nevertheless, M<sup>u</sup>gge received fourteen days' imprisonment at Spandau. He was reinstated to service in 1907, but since he remained true to his religious convictions, he was placed under investigative arrest for three weeks, and was then sent to Spandau for the second time

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19. Ibid., April 16, 1906, p. 146.



in May, 1907, for a period of five months. Later in the same year he was placed in the insane asylum for six weeks' observation. After his return to service, he was again arrested for refusing duty on Saturday. After only two years in the army he had received sentences totaling five years. In 1908 he was placed in the central prison at Kottbus, Brandenburg. After serving three years he was pardoned for good behavior and released from the prison by the military court.<sup>20</sup>

Robert Ball, another Adventist soldier, had to appear before a military court at Magdeburg in May, 1907, to answer the charge of willful disobedience. The accused had already been imprisoned two months for the same offense, and he acknowledged that while he was in prison in Torgau, Sachsen-Anhalt, during the month of January, he had refused to work on Saturdays. He asserted that according to his religious convictions it would be a sin for him to work from sundown on Friday evening until sunset on Saturday evening and that no punishment could induce him to violate his conscience. The judge was unable to persuade him to forsake his convictions and perform his military duties as a citizen, and accordingly the court sentenced him to six months' imprisonment. In pronouncing the sentence the judge warned

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20. Ibid., January 1, 1912, p. 12; Neue Preussische Zeitung, Berlin, June 27, 1906, p. 2.



Rall that he would be sentenced to hard labor if he trans-  
gressed for the third time.<sup>21</sup>

As instances of adherence to religious beliefs increased the German army officials became perplexed. It was evident that Adventist soldiers would not violate their consciences regardless of consequence. For about nine months during 1904 and 1905 when a new recruit was found to be a Seventh-day Adventist, he was rejected as unfit for military service but the government did not continue this policy. Yet for all of the rigors of the German military discipline the authorities dealt relatively mildly with objectors for conscience's sake. They meted out to Seventh-day Adventists no punishment worse than imprisonment, or enforced labor on fortifications, or duty in hospitals.<sup>22</sup>

21. Manuscript report of L. R. Conradi dated September 2, 1907, Hamburg, Germany sent to the General Conference, Washington, D. C., Advent Source Collection; Volksstme, Magdeburg, Germany, May 12, 1907, p. 8.
22. Historical Sketches, pp. 19-20; Spicer, Our Story of Missions, pp. 132-33.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE CRISIS OVER MILITARY SERVICE

#### German Seventh-day Adventist Policy Toward Military Service

With the outbreak of the war in 1914 Seventh-day Adventists in the United States became greatly concerned for the continued success of their movement and for the welfare of their brethren in Europe. Confronted with the problem of obligatory military service President Arthur Daniells and the General Conference Executive Committee took an indecisive stand, believing that they could not enunciate a uniform policy for all members of the church throughout the world, since situations and military regulations varied in different countries. It was expected, therefore, that Adventists would adjust their practice of church policy according to the regulations of the country in which they lived. Although the General Conference Executive Committee officially asserted in 1914 that the guiding principles enunciated during the Civil War were still valid for Adventists in the United States where conditions were favorable to them, it recognized the difficult position of the Adventists in Germany, and concluded that no policy could be dictated for their guidance. It therefore



directed the conferences in each country to come to their own decisions as circumstances allowed, and enjoined each individual to find his own solution according to the dictates of his conscience, while not forgetting to obey God's law, with special emphasis on the fourth commandment (remember the seventh-day Sabbath) and the sixth (thou shalt not kill). In general, the European Adventists accepted this counsel, but when they encountered difficulty their religious scruples weakened and they chose the easiest way out.<sup>1</sup>

For several years before the outbreak of hostilities in 1914, L. R. Conradi, president of the European Division, Hans F. Schuberth, president of the East German Union, and Paul Drinhaus, president of the Saxonian Conference, had reiterated the denominational policy, which was opposed to the performance of duty on the Sabbath and the bearing of arms. Since the German government did not recognize the original position of the church, the German Adventist leaders, Conradi, Schuberth, and Guy Dail sent a petition to the War Ministry in Berlin in July, 1914, requesting that the Adventist men be free from all military duty on Saturdays.<sup>2</sup> This request was refused by Emperor William who himself wrote on the margin of the petition, "no pardon for Adventists."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Zions-Wächter (Hamburg), October 19, 1914, p. 467; Wächter der Wahrheit (Hamburg), April 1, 1919, pp. 5-6.
  2. Guy Dail was the secretary of the European Division.
  3. Zions-Wächter (Hamburg), October 19, 1914, p. 467; Copy of Manuscript letter from H. F. Schuberth, Hamburg, Germany, to the Ministry of War, Berlin, Germany, dated July 21, 1914, Advent Source Collection.



Consequently, these Seventh-day Adventist leaders in Germany, seeing no way out of military service for their young men and swayed by the surging spirit of nationalism and political propaganda, assumed the authority to notify the government of the church's support of the national military effort. Nationalism took such a strong hold on these and other Adventist leaders, as well as most of the lay members, that they became blind to the basic principles of the denomination and to the spiritual issues which Adventist young men were having to face.<sup>4</sup>

There was no formal organizational pronouncement to German Adventist church members at the beginning of the war concerning their relationship to military service. In directives to the various churches Conradi and Schubertsh unofficially declared the German church's position. In August, 1914, Conradi stipulated that under the emergency the German Adventists could perform military service, bear arms, and work on Saturdays.

Schubertsh emphasized this same stand in a letter to the War Ministry in Berlin on August 4, 1914. The letter also pointed out the various reasons why Seventh-day Adventists originally opposed military duty on Saturday and the bearing of arms. This pledge to the German government was a complete reversal of the historic position of the denomination and contrary to the General Conference position.

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4. Christian, The Aftermath of Fanaticism or a Counterfeit Reformation, p. 17.



It was reiterated in a letter signed by Conradi, Schubert, and Drinhaus to the Commanding General of the VII Army Corps in Dresden on March 5, 1915.<sup>5</sup>

Schubert likewise issued an unofficial announcement to the Adventist members in Germany through a directive issued to the various churches in September, 1914, holding that in Germany noncombatancy did not exist. He found it permissible, accordingly, for German Adventists to bear arms. It was a weak attempt to justify the pledge which he had just given to the German government. An overwhelming majority of the members of the church accepted and supported the position of Conradi and Schubert. About two per cent of the membership, however, condemned Conradi's stand and refused to abide by it; their persistent refusal resulted in dismissal from the membership of the church and the development of an opposing movement. This so-called "reform" movement will be dealt with fully in chapter six.<sup>6</sup>

The dissatisfaction among a small segment of the church membership with Conradi's stand on the military question prompted him to a further explanation in April, 1915. He put it in a circular sent to every member by the Missionary Departments of the German Unions and local Conference organizations. Conradi advised the members to perform their

5. Copy of manuscript letter of H. F. Schubert, Hamburg, Germany, to the War Ministry, Berlin, Germany, August 4, 1914, Advent Source Collection; Christian, op. cit., p. 38.
6. Wächter der Wahrheit (Hamburg), April 1, 1919, p. 8; Dresdner Neuesten Nachrichten, April 12, 1918, p. 3; Zions-Wächter (Hamburg), May 3, 1915, p. 139.



military duty to the Fatherland, even on Saturdays, but he left it to their individual consciences to decide whether to follow this counsel or not; if the church directive seemed contrary to their conviction they were at liberty to refuse. Conradi's sanction of military duty and service on Saturday was effective in changing the practice of Adventist soldiers. The German Adventist leader also advised the members of the church to pray for the victory of the German military forces. Conradi authorized these actions without the official sanction of any local, union, division, or General Conference organization.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the explanations to the membership concerning the Adventist position on the military question, dissatisfaction continued and the opposition charged commandment breaking. In this indictment they were wholly justified, since one of the Ten Commandments forbade work on the Sabbath. Disturbed by the crisis which the coming of the war had precipitated for Seventh-day Adventists in Germany and elsewhere in Europe, the secretary of the European Division in June, 1915, invited an expression of opinion from Mrs. Ellen G. White in California.<sup>8</sup> At the time Mrs. White was well advanced in years, indeed, she was within a month

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7. Wächter der Wahrheit (Hamburg), April 1, 1919, pp. 5-7; Review and Herald (Washington, D. C.), January 20, 1921, Christian, op. cit., p. 47.

8. Zions-Wächter (Hamburg), December 6, 1915, p. 365; Guy Dail, Berne, Switzerland, to Mrs. E. G. White, St. Helena, California, June 10, 1915, Ellen G. White Publications.



of her death, and her son, William C. White, replied on her behalf. He recounted a recent conversation during which he had pointed out to her that some members of the faith, both in America and in Europe, believed it better for young Adventists to refuse to bear arms, even when they knew that, as a result of their action, they would be shot. Mrs. White had replied to her son, "I do not think they ought to do that. I think they ought to stand to their duty as long as time lasts." The meaning of this statement was not absolutely clear to denominational officials and caused some confusion.<sup>9</sup>

Afterwards as a supplement to her son's letter Mrs. White, despite her infirmities, sent a letter to the European Division in which she encouraged all European Adventist men called to arms to perform their military duty as long as necessary. In justification she recalled to her readers that when Christ stood before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea, He recognized that wars were not always unjust or wrong. Her statement was generally interpreted by German Adventists to mean that Adventist men should faithfully perform their military duty by bearing arms and serving on Saturday if necessary. The Adventist leaders in Germany, in the light of Mrs. White's message, looked upon every request to be excused from military service

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9. William C. White, St. Helena, California, to Edson White, Washington, D. C., April 11, 1915; W. C. White, St. Helena, to Guy Dail, Berne, Switzerland, June 30, 1915, Ellen G. White Publications.



as a wish to escape from performing a necessary duty.

Mrs. White had not issued her statement as an official declaration of the church; the authority for the church's pronouncements rested only with the General Conference Executive Committee.<sup>10</sup>

The secretary of the European Division sent copies and German translations of the two White letters to the various leaders and churches in Germany. According to the secretary's interpretation of Mrs. White's statement, the Adventist organization of each country had the authority to decide what position to take with respect to military service. Members of the European Division Executive Committee hoped that if Seventh-day Adventists faithfully performed their duties to the government the denomination's desire to respect the seventh-day Sabbath question would receive more sympathetic attention.<sup>11</sup>

The official Adventist organ, Zions-Wächter, cited Martin Luther to justify the position taken by the church in Germany. Luther had indeed justified the bearing of arms in the defense of one's home and family; the sword and war, he had asserted, were instituted of God to punish injustice and to protect the just. The German Adventist leaders taught that under the existing conditions participation in the war

10. Zions-Wächter (Hamburg), December 6, 1915, p. 365; Arthur White, Washington, D. C., to Jack M. Patt, Campbell, California, July 5, 1955, in possession of Jack Patt, Santa Clara, California.

11. Ibid., December 2, 1918, p. 209.



was no violation of the sixth commandment and that war duty on Saturday was no violation of the fourth commandment, since war was a work of necessity, allowable on the Sabbath.<sup>12</sup>

During the war years, 1914 to 1918, as in previous years, the vast majority of Adventists in Germany as well as elsewhere, believed that killing was unchristian. Nevertheless, war took on a different meaning when their leaders, Conradi and Schubert, persuaded them that through its means women and children, homes and possessions, virtue, honor, and peace would be defended. They became convinced that it was not wrong to bear arms in that case, and most of the German Adventist men fought with an honest conviction that their country was justified in the war.<sup>13</sup>

Conradi had learned of the opposition to his position on military service by the members of the General Conference Executive Committee in November, 1915, when he attended its session at Loma Linda, California, and when William Spicer visited Germany in 1917. At the Loma Linda meeting members of the committee refused to sanction the document sent to the German government by Schubert in 1914, supporting the government's position. They further told Conradi that he would have to return and "find his way as best he could in the multitude of difficulties that came in days of war."

12. Ibid., July 5, 1915, p. 201; February 1, 1915, p. 34; December 6, 1915, p. 365; Exodus 20:8-11, Authorized King James version.

13. Ibid., July 5, 1915, p. 201; Wächter der Wahrheit (Hamburg), April 1, 1919, p. 8.



It was evident that the committee was disturbed at Conradi's obdurate attitude and decided that since he had put himself into this predicament he would have to extricate himself as best he could. Conradi was perplexed and disappointed by the apparently unsympathetic attitude of the committee and, indeed, filled with resentment. When he returned to Germany, he told the membership that the General Conference had directed him to do the best he could under the circumstances. The German leadership already felt that they were doing the best they could under the circumstances and contemplated no change of position. Subsequently, the General Conference informed the churches in Great Britain, Scandinavia, and elsewhere in Europe of the German decision and the attitude of the Executive Committee toward the action of Conradi and Schuberth. The Adventist leaders in these other lands strongly supported the traditional position of the denomination towards military duty and approved the action of the General Conference Executive Committee in its condemnation of Conradi and his brethren in Germany.<sup>14</sup>

The German Adventists received a fresh reminder of the denomination's historic position with respect to military service when in May, 1917, the North American Division Executive Committee reaffirmed that position. In the committee discussions it was clear that the members looked on the new

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14. Christian, op. cit., pp. 26, 28, 34; Minutes of the General Conference Executive Committee meeting, November 13, 1915, held at Loma Linda, California, Advent Source Collection.



resolution as the denomination's comment on what they considered the erroneous stand taken by their German colleagues. Some committeemen felt that they should have made an unequivocal statement in 1914; had the denomination's position been made quite clear at that time, they argued, the crisis in Germany might have been averted. But 1914 was beyond recall and now, in 1917, just after the United States entered the war, it was eminently in order for the church in America to review and to renew the old Adventist attitudes toward war and Sabbath-keeping. The Review and Herald and other denominational journals repeatedly published the committee's decisions during the remaining course of the war and copies went to the brethren in Great Britain, France, and Scandinavia.<sup>15</sup>

#### Development of an Opposing Advent Movement

Before the outbreak of the first World War little dissension existed among Seventh-day Adventists in Europe. Then almost simultaneously factionalism developed in the Baltic states, the Balkans, the Netherlands, and Germany. In Germany the "counterfeit reform movement," as it came to be known by the denomination, originated with Karl Hossfeld, a former Seventh-day Adventist minister living in Berlin, who stated that he had received a vision from God in January, 1915, which revealed that the end of the world would come in the spring of that year. He was soon joined by Samuel Elsner,

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15. Review and Herald (Washington, D. C.), June 14, 1917, p. 11; Christian, op. cit., p. 30.



a former Seventh-day Adventist itinerant minister who had been defrocked for his eccentric ideas. Both men had deserted from the army and had fled to Bremen where they received the protection and financial support of a few church members. In that city and other places they distributed a tract in 1915 entitled "Signs of the Times," which claimed that the end of the world had already begun in 1914 when the war broke out, a prediction which contradicted Hossfeld's alleged vision. In 1916, Hossfeld asserted that the second advent would occur in 1918, and submitted a chart of prophetic dates as evidence for his conclusion.<sup>16</sup>

Both Hossfeld and Elsner were quick to take advantage of the dissension which arose in the church concerning military service. In 1914 some of the German Adventist leaders had gone on record with the military authorities as supporting the bearing of arms by Adventist soldiers and their performance of duty on Saturday during the war emergency.<sup>17</sup> Hossfeld and Elsner, anxious to circulate their own ideas among the entire Adventist denomination and gain control over it claimed that their movement originated as a protest against the mistake made by the German Adventist leaders in regard to military obligations.<sup>18</sup> Actually, however, this was not the case, for these ideas concerning the end of the world developed not only in Germany but also in other parts of

16. Christian, op. cit., pp. 18-19, 21.

17. These German Adventist leaders were Hans F. Schubert, Louis R. Conradi, Guy Dail, and Emil Frauchiger. Ibid., pp. 19, 20.

18. Zions-Wächter (Hamburg), April 17, 1916, p. 132.



Europe where Adventists were not influenced by any of the mistakes made by the German Adventist leaders; nor did this opposition group begin their attacks until some time after Schuberth's letter supporting the bearing of arms and performance of duty by Adventists on Saturday was sent to the German government. The faction could quote the General Conference in condemnation of arms bearing and Sabbath work by German Adventists, but actually it was out of harmony with the General Conference because of its opposition to any kind of military service. Hossfeld and his followers distributed one hundred thousand copies of a leaflet asserting that the Seventh-day Adventist leaders had departed from the principles of their faith by advocating the bearing of arms and the performance of military duty on Saturday.<sup>19</sup>

Hossfeld and Elsner and their followers became opposed to church policy on other points and stirred up confusion and outright rebellion among approximately four hundred Adventist church members, some two per cent of the church membership in Germany. As a result of these activities, a crisis developed in 1915 in the Seventh-day Adventist organization in Germany. It was this activity and not the military issue that caused the Conradi group to expel the faction from the regular church organization. Thereupon the dissidents started a new movement, calling their organization

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19. Christian, op. cit., pp. 17, 19-20.



the Reformed Seventh-day Adventist Church.<sup>20</sup> This group included men of talent, former officers in the regular church organization, who became bitter enemies of the church. Some of them, however, had never been Adventists.<sup>21</sup>

Embittered by their expulsion from the regular church organization, the "reformers" went so far as to make false accusations to the police against the Adventists, thus endangering their lives and religious activities. In 1915 the "reformers" issued a document against militarism and war, in the name of the Seventh-day Adventist organization, and sent it to the government. The military authorities immediately issued an order for the cessation of all Adventist missionary activity, but the order was rescinded after the Seventh-day Adventist officials exposed the deception.<sup>22</sup>

Hossfeld and Elsner made Conradi the main object of verbal and written attacks. They attempted to discredit him through false accusations, issuing in 1916 what they termed his "acknowledged beliefs." They claimed that he sanctioned the eating of swine's flesh and the drinking of alcohol, both of which were contrary to the principles of the church. Conradi firmly denied the accusations and asserted that he had both written and spoken against these things for thirty-

20. For the sake of brevity and to distinguish them from the orthodox Seventh-day Adventist organization, they will hereafter be referred to as the "reformers."

21. Christian, op. cit., pp. 19-22; Wächter der Wahrheit (Hamburg, April 1, 1919, p. 3; Zions-Wächter (Hamburg), April 3, 1916, pp. 107-108.

22. Christian, op. cit., pp. 21, 22, 26.



eight years. He referred to the members of the new sect as false witnesses endeavoring unjustly to stigmatize the Seventh-day Adventist leaders.<sup>23</sup>

The "reformers" made charges against the organized church, among them the following: Adventist doctrines were disseminated with no enthusiasm by the church organization in Germany; God demanded full obedience to His Law, but Seventh-day Adventists, through public avowal of obedience to the state, had displayed their unbelief in and disregard for God's Law; Seventh-day Adventists had violated the fourth and sixth commandments,<sup>24</sup> whereas the "reformers" faithfully observed the seventh-day Sabbath and opposed the bearing of arms under any circumstances;<sup>25</sup> the ministers and leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church were oblivious to the signs of the times just as were the blinded and hardened Israelites whom they had come to resemble; a genuine missionary work had not been accomplished by the General Conference since 1909. Some of these charges were no doubt true, but others were exaggerated.<sup>26</sup>

23. Zions-Wächter (Hamburg), April 3, 1916, pp. 107-108.

24. Fourth Commandment: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates". . . . Exodus 20:8-11 (Authorized King James Version).

Sixth Commandment: "Thou shalt not kill." Exodus 20:13 (Authorized King James Version).

The Protestant order of the Ten Commandments is different from the Roman Catholic order.

25. Wächter der Wahrheit (Hamburg), April 1, 1919, pp. 36-37.

26. Zions-Wächter (Hamburg), April 3, 1916, pp. 107-108.



The "reformers" taught openly, in both lectures and pamphlets, that the Seventh-day Adventist church was "Babylon," the false or apostate church, and urged all its members to send their tithes and offerings to the true Reformed Church. The new sect not only railed against the European Division of Seventh-day Adventists and its leader, accusing them of "shameful apostasy," but they also included all Adventists under the term "apostates." Their expression "shameful apostasy" referred primarily to the letter sent by Adventist leaders to the German military authorities concerning the duties of Adventists in war and the attitude which Adventist soldiers should take toward the bearing of arms. Those Adventist young men who served in the medical service were condemned and the medical corps was denounced as the "devil's service."<sup>27</sup>

In contrast to the service that Seventh-day Adventists rendered in the armed forces the "reformers" went into the army unwillingly and some even deserted, while others did their best to evade military duty. In a group of fifty "reformers" thirty designated themselves as itinerant preachers in an effort to evade military service. Since the government was lenient toward ministers of the gospel, they were not immediately called. Of the other twenty the fortunes of their leaders, Friedrich Wieck and Adolph Czukta, were typical. Both of these men were drafted into the armed forces during the first days of the war, but they refused to bear

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27. Christian, op. cit., pp. 21, 22, 26.



arms on the grounds that they could not violate the sixth commandment. Both were allowed to serve without weapons for several weeks until the time of their departure for combat. Then, for the first time, they were placed under arrest for fourteen days because they refused to be vaccinated. They were warned that if they continued their resistance they would be executed by a firing squad. Just before the departure of their unit for the front they deserted and hid in Berlin, from where they sent their uniforms back to their unit. They then posed as itinerant preachers and were able to move about unmolested for several weeks, Wieck in Kiel and Czuka in Berlin. They were eventually arrested and were examined on their religious stand. They did not defend their action before the military court, nor did the church make an effort to come to their defense. As a result they were sentenced to five years imprisonment, a penalty which the other Adventist "reformers" also received when they refused military duty. The health of all suffered because of a lack of heat and proper nourishment in prison, and five died shortly after their release.<sup>28</sup>

#### Adventists in War

More than two thousand Seventh-day Adventists, including scores of missionaries, were among the millions of soldiers in the German army from 1914 to 1918. This number represented about ten per cent of the total Adventist member-

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28. Johannes Ohrtmann, Die Kriegsdienst-Gegnerbewegung (Heide, 1932), p. 9.



ship in Germany. In some conference organizations more than half of the men saw active military service. Of these two thousand German Adventists engaged in the war, 257 were killed in action.<sup>29</sup>

German Adventist-soldiers performed many different kinds of tasks in the military service. Because of their religious beliefs most of those conscripted during the first year of war requested service in the medical corps. Comparatively few of these requests were granted on induction if the soldier was physically fit for combat duty. The army endeavored to treat all enlisted men alike and to show no favoritism. Furthermore, the emperor, the government, and the army did not recognize conscientious objections. Individual company commanders, none the less out of their personal sympathetic understanding, recommended transfers to the medical corps; but after the church authorities gave their open support to the government, Adventist enlisted men could not easily defend their opposition to Sabbath labor and regular military duties and they could no longer hope for the leniency previously given them. Many, including ministers, performed combat duty without apparent twinges of conscience. The action of their religious leaders had made it easy for them to violate their previous convictions. A few Adventist

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29. Zions-Wächter (Hamburg), August 17, 1914, p. 401; January 4, 1915, p. 2; March 6, 1916, p. 73; Review and Herald (Washington, D. C.), December 23, 1920, p. 14.



soldiers, however, maintained their religious scruples and had to pay the harsh consequences.<sup>30</sup>

Adventist ministers were not exempt from military service, and once their church superiors had given the signal their spirit of patriotism made them glad to comply. Sometimes the local company commander would permit an Adventist minister to act as field pastor and conduct religious services for the soldiers, and thus he would be exempted from using weapons.<sup>31</sup>

At times Adventist soldiers met together, usually in groups of five to ten. It was very seldom that more were in the same unit. They firmly believed in the power of prayer to help them out of difficulties. Some would get together each evening for prayer or for a religious service. Whenever possible, they held their own religious services on Saturday, or tried to visit their denominational church if there was one in the vicinity. Occasionally they were able to observe their Sabbath with Adventist families located near their billet. Often there were non-Adventist listeners at the meetings conducted by Adventist soldiers, especially among the sick. These Adventist young men as a group were

30. Zions-Wächter (Hamburg), May 3, 1915, p. 139; July 19, 1915, p. 256; Review and Herald (Washington, D. C.), December 23, 1920, pp. 11-14; Schreiber, Kriegsdienstverweigerung - eine historische und rechtsvergleichende Untersuchung, p. 81.

31. Zions-Wächter (Hamburg), July 3, 1916, p. 188; May 6, 1918, p. 67; August 5, 1918, p. 130.



not ashamed to practice what they believed. As German Christians they prayed on the battlefield, as well as elsewhere, that their lives would be spared and that they would gain victory over the enemy, and they prayed that peace might come soon. As members of their special denomination they prayed for freedom from Saturday duty and continually expressed their yearning for Christ's coming and for the end of all things on this earth.<sup>32</sup>

During the war there was no uniform policy in the German army concerning the granting of freedom for Seventh-day Adventist soldiers on Saturday. The company commander determined the allocation of duties, and generally there was no inclination among officers to grant privileges which might be construed as showing favoritism to a person or a group. Some officers, however, were sympathetic to Adventist scruples and allowed their Adventist men free Saturdays if the occasion was suitable. Actual battle conditions and press of duties frequently made a day off an impossibility, and it was these practical necessities rather than prejudice that weighed heaviest in the balance when Adventists asked for unusual consideration. If an Adventist soldier was transferred to a new unit, he had to renew his request for Sabbath privileges, since the decision in the German army always rested with the company commander. Sometimes this request had to be made every week. Some Adventists did not receive Saturdays free at first request, but with persistence

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32. Ibid., January 5, 1915, pp. 3-5; March 15, 1915, p. 85; May 3, 1915, p. 139.



and explanation they were given the day off. As a general rule they worked on Sundays in compensation for the privilege.<sup>33</sup>

A few Adventist soldiers were placed under arrest and court-martialed for refusing to perform duty on Saturday. Some even remained in their barracks without permission and willingly suffered the consequences. Company officers and fellow soldiers were usually amazed that anyone would defy military orders for conscience' sake. The interest that was thus aroused afforded the Adventist soldiers opportunities to testify for their faith, to explain their beliefs, and to distribute religious publications. However, most of the Adventist servicemen who did not receive Saturdays free performed their duties on that day in order to avoid difficulties with the authorities. There were no members of the Seventh-day Adventist church who refused induction into the army on the grounds of conscience. There were several, however, from the reformed group of Adventists who refused induction, and in some cases they went into hiding to escape army service. Most of them were apprehended and court-martialed.<sup>34</sup>

Despite their capitulation to the necessities of the German military law, most of the Adventist soldiers in the

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33. Schreiber, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11; *Zions-Wächter* (Hamburg), July 19, 1915, pp. 219, 221; February 18, 1918, p. 28; April 19, 1915, p. 185; January 15, 1917, p. 11.
34. Schreiber, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-11; *Zions-Wächter* (Hamburg), October 21, 1918, p. 188; February 19, 1917, p. 43; July 3, 1916, p. 188; May 6, 1918, p. 67; April 1, 1918, p. 54.



service were active missionaries. This was not unusual since Adventist training, which was thorough, always emphasized the importance and necessity of missionary activity. This inducement undoubtedly was enhanced by Adventist ministers depicting the non-Adventists as being enshrouded in spiritual darkness. It was the desire to "save" and enlighten those in "darkness." Consequently, Adventist soldiers were inspired with religious fervor to give Bible studies to their comrades, even during time of battle.

The Adventist soldiers made large demands upon the Adventist members at home for religious books, Bibles, and papers for distribution. At times, requests were made for publications in the French, Russian, and other languages to be distributed among the prisoners and civilians. The longer the war lasted, the greater was the demand for religious publications. The Adventist soldiers distributed hundreds of religious publications, such as the Herold der Wahrheit, tracts, and other papers. When they taught and discussed Adventist doctrines, they placed particular emphasis on the signs and conditions in the world in the last days of its history as written in the book of Matthew. They believed, as did the denomination as a whole, that the World War was a sign of the imminent advent of Christ. Some of the non-Adventist soldiers were invited into Adventist homes where these articles of faith were freely discussed. On a few occasions Adventist soldiers were invited to the homes of officers and took the opportunity to give them Adventist



books, Bibles, and Bible studies, but such an invitation was a rare occurrence, since fraternization between officers and enlisted men was not common.

As a result of the missionary activity of Adventist soldiers and the example of their Christian character, two hundred and eighty-six known persons in the German army were proselyted to Adventism. Some Adventist soldiers were at times ridiculed for their beliefs by their comrades; sometimes they were forbidden by their commanding officer to speak about the Bible and their religious beliefs. Despite these difficulties most of the Adventist soldiers never lost courage, but continued to discuss their religious beliefs wherever they could.<sup>35</sup>

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35. Zions-Wächter (Hamburg), June 6, 1904, p. 115; October 21, 1918, p. 188; February 19, 1917, p. 43; July 3, 1916, p. 188; May 6, 1918, p. 67; January 15, 1917, p. 11; April 1, 1918, p. 54; August 5, 1918, p. 130; October 7, 1918, p. 165.